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SUBJECT: PORTUGAL'S EURO ELECTIONS; A SLAP AT THE SOCIALISTS

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¶1. Portugal's June 7 elections for the European Parliament held close to pre-election polling data, with the exception of the beating voters administered to the ruling Socialist Party (PS). The PS polled around 36 percent last week, yet received only 27 percent on election day, resulting in only seven seats in the European Parliament. Besides the PS misery, the big surprises of the day were turnout -- while observers lament the 37 percent participation, it was actually significantly higher than predicted -- and the success of the right-of-center Popular Party (CDS-PP).

¶2. The big winner of the day was the opposition Social Democratic Party (PSD), which received 32 percent of the vote, resulting in eight seats. "Victory," however, meant only a slight increase on the status quo. The PSD's share of the vote was exactly as polls predicted and resulted in only one additional seat. The CDS-PP also scored a victory with the status quo, as it maintained its hold on its two seats. Having polled over eight percent, however, the CDS-PP vastly outperformed predictions that showed it losing all representation. The two left-wing parties -- Portugal Communist Party (PCP) and the Left Bloc (BE) -- performed as polls predicted, with over ten percent each. The BE's one-tenth of a point lead on the PCP (10.8 to 10.7, respectively) gave it a third seat while the PCP earned only two.

¶3. The final delegation list is as follows (note that Portugal's overall EP delegation shrank from 24 to 22 seats):

	2009	2004
PSD (center-right)	8	7
PS (center-left)	7	12
BE (left)	3	1
PCP (left)	2	2
CDS-PP (right)	2	2

Comment

¶4. While headlines and broadcasts trumpet what this means for 2009 national elections, we believe it actually means very little. With less than half the turnout expected for national elections, there is little significance to these results, particularly given the popular belief that "Europe" is irrelevant to the voters' daily lives. The one significant projection from these results is that PSD leader Manuela Ferreira Leite is now secure in her position and need not fear a leadership challenge from within the party.

For more reporting from Embassy Lisbon and information about Portugal, please see our Intelink site:

<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/portal:portugal>
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